

Good Ideas For Propane Safety

What You Don't Know CAN Hurt You **Safety...It's Up to You**

Propane is a safe, reliable fuel. Like many other fuels, however, it is flammable. That means it can be dangerous if not handled properly.

Remember, in order to protect you, your family and others, you must be aware of (and respect) the normal, everyday hazards around you. Propane is no exception.

This information will increase your understanding of how to use your propane system safely. Read it now, and make certain your family and friends are familiar with this accident prevention information. Bookmark this site for future reference.

A Pressure Situation

The propane in your gas system is stored under pressure. While it is stored, there's no problem. But, in the unlikely event your system develops a leak (which can be caused by physical damage or deterioration), it can become dangerous.

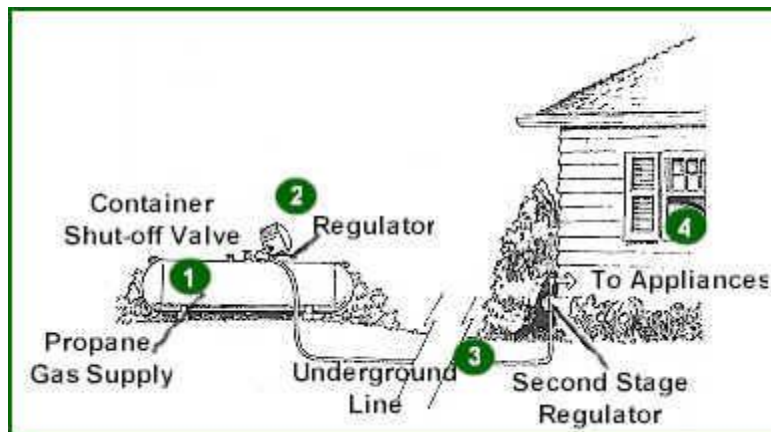
Propane burns at an even rate when properly mixed with air, as in your stove or furnace. But, if a leak occurs, a flame or spark could ignite it. If that happens, it could cause a fire - or even an explosion. Although such accidents are rare, we want you to be aware of this possibility.

Know Your Propane System

Your propane system has four basic parts:

1. A tank or cylinder, equipped with a main shutoff valve;
2. One or more regulators, designed to reduce pressure between the container and your appliance(s);
3. Gas piping, to carry the propane to your appliance(s); and

4. Gas appliance(s)



The tank or cylinder is where the propane is stored. It is equipped with a shutoff valve, which turns the gas "on" or "off". The regulator controls the gas pressure, while the gas piping carries the gas to your appliance(s).

It is important for you to know the location of the main shutoff valve on the tank or cylinder. Remember its location and become familiar with how to shut it off in an emergency situation.

How Do You Tell If There Is A Leak?

- **By Smell:** A disagreeable odor is added to the propane so that you will be able to detect the smell easily in case a leak develops or an unlit burner is left turned on.

If you smell gas, don't light it!

If you can't light it, don't fight it!

- **By Electronic Gas Alarm:** If used, the gas alarm supplements a person's ability to detect a gas leak and sounds a warning when it detects the presence of unburned propane.

You should be aware that some persons have different thresholds of smell and cannot detect odor or propane as readily as others. Also, sometimes people with a normal sense of smell temporarily lose their ability to detect

odors because of illness, use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs. Also, cooking odors, tobacco smoke and aerosol and odor removing sprays can cover up other odors. In certain instances, the odorant in the propane may diminish or weaken, making it difficult for a person with a normal sense of smell to detect a gas leak. Be aware that being heavier than air, leaking propane may tend to settle near the floor while dissipating into the air.

Steps to Take if You Smell Gas or the Alarm Sounds

Never assume that the odor of gas is a sign that your tank is running low. If you smell gas in the house or if the gas alarm signals the presence of gas, IMMEDIATELY follow these suggestions:

- Extinguish all smoking materials and any other open flames or sources of ignition.
- Get everyone outside and away from the building.
- Shut off the gas supply at the tank.
- Call your propane supplier from a neighbor's phone. If you cannot reach your propane supplier, call the fire department.
- Stay outside and leave the gas off until the leak has been found and fixed.
- Do not turn light switches, appliances or thermostats on or off, and do not use the telephone. A spark from one of these could ignite the gas.
- Do not light or try to re-light any appliances. Leave this job to your propane supplier.
- Do not re-enter the building, until the problem has been corrected.

Inspection of Your Appliance(s)

Routinely (at least annually) call a service technician to examine your gas appliance(s) for any conditions that may render the appliance(s) inefficient or unsafe for use, similar to how you have your automobile checked periodically. All appliances, including gas, should be regularly inspected and maintained, just as electrical appliances, to eliminate possible hazards from short circuits and other malfunctions that could create hazards.

A routine inspection should consist of (but not be limited to) detecting any unsafe or potentially hazardous situations, such as the following:

- Substandard and/or lack of venting systems on appliances requiring them.
- Sootiness and/or the accumulation of soot around interior and exterior appliance components such as around pilot lights, appliance burners, range tops, oven components, etc. This indicates that the appliance is not operating properly or efficiently.
- Leakage of water around or through water heater valves, fittings or jackets. CAUTION: this should alert you to the fact that the water heating device has some internal damage.
- Missing or damaged control components such as dials, knobs, screws, etc.
- Controls that have been tampered with (evidenced by altered design function, missing or substituted components, etc.).
- Controls that have been under water or subjected to flooding. Such controls may not function properly and must be replaced.
- Unstable appliance bases and/or platforms. Warped, rotting or substandard bases and/or platforms may collapse creating a potentially hazardous condition.
- Problems in gas line connectors such as kinks, corrosion, deterioration, etc. Any abnormality should be immediately reported to your propane supplier since failure to correct these problems could create a hazardous situation.
- Unsatisfactory operation of gas valves and safety controls.
- Gas leakage in the appliances or piping system.
- Improper appliance and gas system installation.

A Word About Vented Appliances

Some appliances are required to have vents in order to exhaust harmful combustion gases outside. Poisonous carbon monoxide can be produced from improperly installed or operating appliances. Frequent headaches and nausea may be indicators that this colorless, odorless gas is causing carbon

monoxide poisoning. To minimize the chance of this happening, follow these practices:

- Vented appliances must be installed by a qualified appliance installer.
- Do not operate vented appliances until they have been vented properly.
- After appliance installation and before each heating season, the vents and flues should be checked for blockages and corrosion, either by a qualified installer or a qualified service technician.
- If you buy a used appliance, have it inspected and installed by a qualified propane appliance installer.

When properly installed and maintained, the venting system will also keep walls and other surfaces from overheating and possibly catching fire. Not all gas appliances are suitable for operating on propane. If you buy a used appliance, be sure it is listed for propane and have it installed by a qualified technician.

General Safety Precautions

Here are some general safety procedures to follow when using your propane appliance(s):

- Be alert for the odor of propane when around a gas appliance or container.
- If you smell gas, do not try to light the appliance. Call your propane supplier.
- Read and follow the operating and lighting instructions and warning labels provided by the appliance manufacturer.
- The pilot has a safety device. If you have trouble keeping it lit, this device is warning you about a problem. Call a service technician for assistance.
- Never force any appliance control. If you cannot operate the knobs, switches or buttons by hand, call your supplier. Never tamper with the controls.

Additional Safety Tips

- Keep combustibles, such as curtains, paper, cleaning fluids, etc., away from any energy source, including gas and electric appliances where they may cause a fire.
- Have a B/C rated fire extinguisher readily available. Be sure it is charged and that you and your family know how to use it.
- Gas appliances, like humans, need oxygen (air) to function properly.
- If you smell gas near your tank or cylinder, call your propane supplier.
- Use only listed propane appliances. Look for the seal from a nationally recognized independent testing laboratory.
- Use gas grills outdoors only. Use or store propane cylinders outdoors only.

If you Run Out Of Gas

Letting your propane container run empty creates additional hazards. If you run out of gas and lose pressure in the system, a potentially hazardous, condition can result. If you do run out of gas, follow these steps:

- Turn off all control valves on all gas appliances.
- Turn off the shutoff valve on the propane container(s).
- Call your propane supplier to arrange for delivery, and advise them you are out of gas.
- Don't turn the gas back on yourself. Let the propane supplier do it. When you schedule your fill, be sure it is for a time when you will be at home, so the propane supplier can relight and check your appliances and system to assure that they are operating properly and are leak free.
- Immediately after your tank is refilled, have a service technician check to see that all safety controls are functioning properly and the piping system is leak free.

If You Move or Change Gas Appliances

ALWAYS CALL YOUR PROPANE SUPPLIER WHEN YOU NEED A GAS APPLIANCE CONNECTED OR DISCONNECTED. It is for your safety that the gas

system remain in a safe condition at all times. Should the gas system develop a leak (or if a gas line or shut off valve remains unplugged), a fire, explosion or serious injury could result.

Properly operated and maintained, your propane system and appliance(s) can provide you many years of clean-burning, safe, efficient service. If you have any questions once you have read this information, or do not understand any part of it, call your supplier.

The above information was reprinted from a brochure #5605, from the National Propane Gas Association and the Gas Appliance Manufacturer's Association - dated 1993.